

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Policy and Performance Advisory Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>3 November 2022</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>To scrutinise the issue of wastewater discharge into local rivers and seas</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Simon Russell, Head of Democratic Services</b>
<b>Ward(s):</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<b>To scrutinise the work of Southern Water in relation to wastewater discharge into local rivers and seas, in response to a resolution of Full Council.</b>
<b>Officer recommendation(s):</b>	<b>1) To note the report</b> <b>2) To provide a report to Full Council detailing the work of the Committee to date, detailing any evidence gathering and areas where it feels improvements can be made, or where further scrutiny is required.</b>
<b>Reasons for recommendations:</b>	<b>To fulfil the Committee's role in reflecting the views of the public and looking in depth at issues of concern in the District.</b>
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	<b>Name: Nick Peeters</b> <b>Post title: Committee Officer</b> <b>E-mail: <a href="mailto:nick.peeters@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk">nick.peeters@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk</a></b> <b>Telephone number: 07935085770</b>

---

## **1 Introduction**

1.1 In its role as a provider of public scrutiny the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee has a responsibility to look outward and to amplify the voices and concerns of the public. The Committee is able to do this by requesting that representatives from organisations and other stakeholders attend meetings and where appropriate, explain their actions and seek resolutions.

The area of concern highlighted in this report, and one that the Council feels is impacting on the health and wellbeing of its residents and the environment, is the regular discharge of wastewater into local rivers and seas and the level of water quality in the District. Representatives from Southern Water, along with other stakeholders have been invited to discuss the issue with members of the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee at its meeting on the 3 November.

## **2 Request from Full Council**

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Full Council on 23 May 2022, Members considered a Motion put forward by Councillor Emily O'Brien. The resolution approved included a request that the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee invite the Chief Executive of Southern Water plus senior representatives from the Environment Agency and Natural England to attend a Lewes District Council Policy and Performance Advisory Committee meeting to answer questions on the current levels of sewage discharge.
- 2.2 The details of the motion and the request to Full Council can be seen at appendix 1 to the report. The issues raised at the Full Council meeting on the 23 May include the overall cumulative impact of sewage discharge in the District and site specific incidents of overloading.

## **3 Stakeholders**

- 3.1 Southern Water is the private utility company responsible for the public wastewater collection in Lewes District. Southern Water's responsibility in terms of flooding is to manage sewers so the contents continue to flow through them. Southern Water has been provided with a list of questions ahead of the Committee's meeting and these can be seen at appendix 2 to the report.
- 3.2 The Environment Agency is the Governmental Agency responsible for water quality and resources, and managing the risk of flooding from main rivers, reservoirs, estuaries, and the sea. An invitation was sent to the Environment Agency to attend the meeting on the 3 November, however, due to a conflict of interests, representatives are not available to attend. The Environment Agency have provided a copy of a letter sent to Lewes District Councillors in response to the Motion, appendix 3 to this report. Additional information has also been provided in response to the questions sent to Southern Water and these are included in appendix 4 to this report. Any further information received prior to the meeting will be made available.
- 3.3 Natural England is the Government's adviser for the natural environment in England and representatives have also been invited to the meeting.

## **4 Attendance at the 3 November Policy and Performance Advisory Committee meeting**

- 4.1 Representatives from Southern Water will be joining the meeting via Microsoft Teams and the meeting will be streamed for public viewing.

## **5 Financial appraisal**

- 5.1 There is no direct financial impact as a result of the report.

## **6 Legal implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct legal implications as a result of the report

**7 Risk management implications**

7.1 There are no direct risk management implications as a result of the report

**8 Equality analysis**

8.1 There are no direct equality issues as a result of the report

**9 Environmental sustainability implications**

9.1 There are no direct environmental sustainability implications as a result of the report.

**10 Appendices**

**Appendix 1** – Motion to the 23 May Full Council

**Appendix 2** – List of questions sent to Southern Water

**Appendix 3** – Environment Agency response to Full Council motion

**Appendix 4** – Additional information from the Environment Agency

**11 Background papers - [Lewes District Council Annual/Full Council meeting 23 May 2022](#)**